Ophthalmologist Dr Pramila Lall passes away

By Amjad Iqbal

TAXILA: Ophthalmologist Dr Pramila Lall, one of Pakistan's most revered medical professionals, passed away peacefully on Saturday at the age of 93 at Christian Hospital, Taxila, where she devoted nearly seven decades of her life in service to humanity.

Hospital officials confirmed her death, describing it as the end of an era for eye care in Pakistan. Dr Lall served at Christian Hospital, Taxila, for over 50 years, providing low-cost, high-quality eye care to millions, particularly the poor.

Widely recognised as Pakistan's first female ophthalmologist, she is also believed to have conducted the highest number of eye surgeries by any woman ophthalmologist in Asia.

Born in Nagpur, India, in 1932, Dr Pramila graduated from the prestigious Christian Medical College, Vellore, in 1957. During her student years, fate introduced her to Dr Ernest Lall, a Pakistani national. Their marriage brought her to Pakistan the same year, where she joined Christian Hospital, Taxila.

She earned her Diploma in Ophthalmology from London in 1964, becoming Pakistan's first woman specialist in the field. Her excellence was recognised internationally when she was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in 1980 and later nominated as an international member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in 1987.

In 1976, she once again made history by becoming the first woman in Pakistan to perform intraocular implant surgery.

A founder member of the Rawalpindi chapter of the Ophthalmological Society of Pakistan, Dr Lall trained generations of national and international doctors in eye surgery and clinical ophthalmology.

She served on the National Steering Committee for the Prevention of Blindness and played a central role in running postgraduate training programmes as head of the ophthalmology department.

Her selfless service earned her numerous accolades, including the prestigious Paul Harrison Award in 1983 for meritorious services to the blind, and the Tamgha-i-Imtiaz in 2002, conferred by then president Pervez Musharraf. According to Dr Nadeem Davaid, administrator of Christian Hospital, her last rites are expected to be held on Tuesday following the arrival of her three children from abroad. She will be laid to rest within the hospital premises beside her late husband, Dr Ernest Lall's grave.

FIA arrests man for human smuggling

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Islamabad has arrested a visa fraud agent involved in human smuggling and overseas employment scams, who was operating an illegal agency under the name Berlin Immigration Solutions in the federal capital.

An FIA official told APP on Saturday that the accused defrauded a citizen of Rs1.9 million on the pretext of securing employment in the United Kingdom. The official said the accused was running Berlin Immigration Solutions without legal authorisation and was allegedly part of an organised human smuggling network that lured innocent citizens with false promises of overseas jobs and visas.

According to the official, the suspect collected a large sum of money from the complainant but failed to provide any legal travel or employment documents, prompting the victim to approach the FIA. He said the agent was arrested following a complaint and a preliminary inquiry, during which evidence of visa fraud and illegal recruitment was established.

The official added that raids were under way to arrest other agents and facilitators linked to the network, while further investigation was in progress to trace additional victims and financial transactions. The FIA reiterated its resolve to crack down on human smuggling and visa fraud networks and advised citizens to verify agents from the FIA's official protectorate list before making any overseas employment arrangements. — APP

WORKERS clean the water fountain in front of the Parliament House building in Islamabad on Saturday. — Online

Manifesto to focus on economic relief, governance reforms in AJK: PML-N member

By Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) plans to place economic relief for the working and lower-middle classes, youth empowerment and institutional reforms at the core of its election manifesto for Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), which is expected to be unveiled ahead of the forthcoming general elections.

The outlines of the proposed manifesto were shared by Shahid Mahmood Wani, a senior PML-N leader and member of the party's manifesto committee, in an informal conversation with journalists here on Saturday. The document, he said, was being framed in line with the vision of party supremo Nawaz Sharif, with an emphasis on confidence-building amid prevailing political uncertainty and tension in the region.

Mr Wani said the manifesto would focus on economic stabilisation and infrastructure development, including encouragement of local and mega hydropower projects to reduce electricity costs and make AJK a load-shedding-free zone. He said the party would also prioritise the timely completion of such projects to ensure affordability and sustainability.

Referring to the communications sector, he said the Mansehra–Muzaffarabad–Mirpur Expressway, envisioned during Nawaz Sharif's earlier tenure, would remain among the party's key commitments. He added that tourism would be treated as a local industry, with emphasis on upgrading inter-district and inter-provincial road networks and constructing some unavoidable tunnels according to international standards.

Mr Wani said the manifesto also proposed using Muzaffarabad and Rawalakot airports for tourism-related operations and launching chairlift projects at Pir Chinasi and Toli Pir to enhance visitor access and economic activity. He added that transparency in the housing sector and regulation of housing societies would also form part of the party's economic agenda.

On social development, Mr Wani said the PML-N intended to accord priority to youth and women, who together constituted a major segment of the population. He said women's participation in governance and their social and economic empowerment would be encouraged, while legislation would be proposed to discourage early-age marriages.

For youth development, he said the party planned to introduce a 'Laptop for All' programme to support intellectual growth and economic opportunity. He added that vocational education and human resource development would receive special attention, with arrangements for training certified medical and technical professionals for employment in Gulf and European countries.

In the education sector, Mr Wani said the manifesto envisaged declaring an education emergency, revamping public schools, making IT laboratories functional, regulating private schools and establishing modern institutions for special children in all three divisions. He said toilets and basic facilities in schools would also be upgraded to ensure a conducive learning environment.

On healthcare, he said the party proposed the construction of major hospitals and trauma centres in all three divisions, along with the revival and improvement of the health card scheme introduced during Nawaz Sharif's tenure. He added that clean drinking water would be treated as a priority and helicopter-based air ambulance services would be introduced to improve emergency response.

Mr Wani said the manifesto would also place strong emphasis on governance and institutional reforms, including improving the justice system, ensuring affordable and speedy justice, reforming policing and police station culture, abolishing VIP privileges and strengthening the local government system. He said a functional public service commission and merit-based recruitment through third-party testing would be key governance measures.

He added that the party intended to draw on initiatives undertaken by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz in public service delivery and social welfare, and adapt similar models to local conditions in AJK.

According to Mr Wani, climate change adaptation, forest conservation, population planning, improved zakat management, activation of price control committees and engagement with lawyers' bodies would also form part of the manifesto, along with special focus on information technology and digital connectivity in line with Nawaz Sharif's vision.

AJK PM, PPP regional chief discuss CEC appointment, accord with rights group

By Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore and Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) regional president Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin on Saturday discussed the overall political situation in the territory, with particular focus on progress in implementing the agreement reached with a rights movement and the long-pending appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).

The discussion took place during a breakfast meeting at the prime minister's camp office at Kashmir House in Islamabad, according to an official press release.

The meeting marked the first formal interaction between the two leaders after the installation of the PPP government on November 17 last year. Mr Yasin, a senior PPP parliamentarian who had been among the contenders for the office of prime minister ahead of the transition, subsequently reconciled with the party's decision to nominate Mr Rathore and extended his support to the new leadership.

During the meeting, the two leaders also reviewed preparations for the second phase of the prime minister's public outreach campaign, during which he is scheduled to visit Mirpur Division. The visit is expected to begin in the second week of January from Charhoi and Khuiratta, the former being the hometown of Mr Yasin.

According to the press release, Mr Yasin said the PPP government was committed to serving the people in line with the vision and philosophy of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. He said the party's decision to entrust leadership to Prime Minister Rathore reflected its priority for the Kashmiri youth.

"This is a heavy responsibility, and fulfilling it will require hard work and sincerity of purpose," the PPP regional president was quoted as saying.

Mr Yasin said the party had assumed power at a time when public confidence in the political system was waning, but added that within a short span of about 45 days, the PPP government had restored public trust through concrete and practical steps to address people's problems.

Prime Minister Rathore, while thanking Mr Yasin, said the guidance and confidence of the party leadership were a source of honour for him. He reiterated that the PPP government believed in public service, transparent governance and the promotion of merit.

The prime minister said that full implementation had already been ensured on several points of the agreement reached with the Joint Awami Action Committee, while progress was under way on other matters as well. He pledged that all available resources would be utilised to resolve the issues faced by the people of the liberated territory.

Islamabad police registered over 25,000 criminal cases in 2025

By Munawer Azeem

ISLAMABAD: The police registered a total of 25,324 criminal cases related to various criminal activities in the federal capital during the year 2025, official data shows.

The reported crimes included murder, attempted murder, dacoity, robbery, snatching, theft and vehicle theft.

Interestingly, the data shows that the police had received a total of 71,482 complaints, but a majority of them did not result in the registration of First Information Reports (FIRs), even though e-tags were issued to the complainants raising serious questions about underreporting of crimes in the federal capital.

According to police procedure, e-tags are issued after confirmation of a crime or illegal activity. Usually, a Dolphin Squad or patrolling unit is the first responder when information is received through the police helpline or other sources. After verifying the incident on the spot, the responding team informs the area police, which then reaches the location, records details and asks the victim to lodge a formal complaint.

An e-tag number is issued to the complainant after the complaint is registered to maintain a central database of crime statistics.

Zone-wise data shows that from January 1 to December 31, 2025, the City Zone police issued 16,845 e-tags but registered only 4,643 FIRs. In the Sadar Zone, 16,112 e-tags were issued, while only 5,900 FIRs were registered. The Industrial Area Zone issued 12,628 e-tags and registered 3,970 cases. The Soan Zone recorded the highest registration ratio, issuing 8,148 e-tags and registering 3,571 cases. Meanwhile, the Rural Zone issued 11,317 e-tags but registered only 3,947 FIRs.

No e-tags were found attached to several FIRs, including FIR Nos 2114, 2116, 2117, 2122, 2123, 2124 and 2125 registered at Khanna police station; FIR No 697 at Secretariat police station; and FIR Nos 461 to 470 registered at Kirpa police station.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Jawad Tariq and Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Ali Raza Qazi were unavailable for comment despite repeated attempts over the past three days.

IWMB confirms presence of common leopard in IIUI

Wildlife board says plans ready to trap animal if it does not return on its own

By Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) on Saturday confirmed the presence of a common leopard on International Islamic University campus.

The wild animal was first spotted on the night of December 24, when students filmed it crouched and then running off into the darkness.

The short clip went viral and Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) responded to the call for assistance from the university, situated in Sector H-10.

"Fresh pug marks were found Friday night, confirming that the common leopard was still present on the campus," said Director Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), Sakhawat Ali.

Establishing a route, the IWMB suspected that the vagrant leopard followed natural rain water drains leading from the Margalla Hills all the way to the university premises. A solitary leopard's home range can stretch roughly 21 kilometres.

Sakhawat Ali suspected that the animal followed prey – wild boars and stray dogs.

The IWMB is reluctant to capture the leopard hoping it would return the same way it came.

"We believe it is a young male roaming calmly. It wandered on its own. It is aware of its surroundings and we hope it will return on its own the way it came just as wild boars and jackals that roam the streets in the night return into their natural habitat," said Sakhawat Ali.

Learning from past experience, when a leopard entered DHA in 2023, flushing could risk panicking the animal.

"Flushing can cause leopard to panic and find shelter in houses where it can injure people - not recommended," the official said, prioritising safety of residents and the leopard.

So far the leopard has avoided the two traps set on the campus. The only animal trapped was a stray dog in search of easy meal.

"We are constantly monitoring the situation. The Capital Development Authority and the district administration has been contacted for inter-agency cooperation should the situation require.

He said trapping could also injure the animal.

"We are arranging for a thermal drone to better track the animal," he said.

However, plans were ready to trap it if it did not return on its own.

"We have three dart guns but will use it only as a last resort and only if the animal is in a confined space. It takes 15 minutes for the tranquiliser to kick in. Those 15 minutes are crucial. The animal can try to escape and it will be harder to find it. There is also the risk that the animal is injured after darting," the official elaborated.

Sakhawat Ali said conservation efforts have led to increase in leopard population in the Margalla Hills National Park.

"In fact we are delighted. The leopard is reclaiming its lost territory," he said.

According to IWMB, the Margalla Hills National Park – stretching from Sangjani to Bara Kahu and Taxila – is now home to 10 common leopards.

In a survey in 2021, seven to eight leopards were found in the national park. In 2022, the national park was declared a leopard reserve. Another survey in 2023 could not be completed after villagers stole camera traps. The common leopard and the snow leopard are the only two surviving indigenous apex preditors left in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, International Islamic University security teams have been instructed not to shoot the animal.

A statement shared by IWMB said: "The International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) confirms that a leopard has been sighted within the broader premises of the university."

As a precaution, advisories have been issued to students, particularly hostel residents in the hostel vicinity, advising them to remain within designated safe areas, including hostels, academic blocks, and main campus zones. Hostel administrations have been placed on alert.

"The IWMB is actively engaged on site in coordination with the university, including the placement of traps and bait under standard wildlife management protocols. Given the university's expansive area and factors such as nocturnal movement and dense fog, monitoring remains ongoing. In parallel, the university has enhanced security and patrolling measures to ensure campus safety," the statement said, adding that IIUI urged all members of the university community to remain calm, follow issued advisories, and cooperate with the authorities until the situation is fully resolved.

This was the third time a common leopard wandered into settled area. In 2022, common leopards were spotted in Saidpur village spreading panic among villagers. In 2023, a common leopard wandered into DHA, was trapped and released into its natural habitat.